DR. KAISEN YAO, MD

ORTHOPEDIC SPORTS MEDICINE SURGEON

Post-Operative Instructions

Wrist and Forearm Fracture Fixation

Northwell Health • Department of Orthopedic Surgery & Sports Medicine • Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD

What to expect and how to care for yourself during the first weeks of recovery.

Patient Name	Date of Surgery	Prescribing Surgeon
		Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD

Activity and Splint Use

- Wear your splint, cast, or brace at all times as instructed, including while sleeping, unless your surgeon tells you it is removable.
- Keep the operative arm elevated above the level of your heart as much as possible, especially for the first several days.
- Move your fingers frequently throughout the day — your splint should not block them, and finger motion helps prevent stiffness and swelling.
- Do not lift, push, or pull anything heavier than a coffee cup with the operative arm, and avoid twisting the forearm against resistance, until cleared by your surgeon.
- Begin physical therapy when directed by your surgeon.
- Perform home exercises as shown on the last page.

Wound and Dressing Care

- Keep your dressing, splint, or cast clean and dry. Do not remove or adjust your splint or cast unless instructed by your surgeon.
- If you have Steri-Strips or surgical glue, allow them to fall off naturally unless instructed otherwise.
- Never place objects inside your splint or cast to scratch an itch — this can injure the skin and cause infection.
- Monitor the incision daily for increased redness, swelling, drainage, separation, or foul odor.
- Do not soak the incision in a tub, pool, or hot tub until cleared by your surgeon.

Pain Management

Some pain, swelling, and stiffness after surgery is normal and expected - the goal of our pain protocol is to keep you comfortable, not pain-free. Your specific prescriptions will be reviewed with you at discharge. Your standard medication plan is:

- **Celecoxib 200 mg** - take by mouth twice daily for 30 days.
- **Oxycodone (Roxicodone) 5 mg** - take by mouth as needed for pain, up to 4 times a day, for the first 5 days after surgery.
- **Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 500 mg** - take by mouth as needed for pain, every 6 hours.
- **Senokot-S (sennosides-docusate)** - take 1 tablet by mouth daily, starting the day of surgery, for 14 days, to help prevent constipation from the pain medication.

If you received a nerve block, remember it will wear off over the following 8-24 hours. Start your pain medication on schedule rather than waiting for the block to wear off, since pain is easier to prevent than to catch up on. Taking medication with food can reduce nausea.

Using a cold therapy unit for roughly an hour on, an hour off while awake can meaningfully reduce pain and swelling. If you don't have a cold therapy unit, regular ice packs work well too - use them as needed, with a thin towel between the ice and your skin.

Do not drive, operate machinery, or drink alcohol while taking narcotic pain medication. If prescribed antibiotics, complete the full course.

Bathing and Showering

• You may shower after the procedure, however, please keep the bandages, splint, or cast covered, clean, and dry.

• A waterproof cast cover or a plastic bag sealed at the top makes showering easier. Call the office if your splint or cast becomes wet.

• After the bandages are removed, you may allow soap and water to run over the incisions. Do not scrub the incisions. Pat the area dry gently.

• Bathing, swimming, or full immersion of the incision is not allowed for at least 3 weeks.

Swelling, Elevation, and Ice

• Swelling is common after orthopedic surgery. Keep the hand and wrist elevated above the level of your heart, and pump your fingers frequently.

• Apply ice packs for 20 minutes at a time, several times daily, with a cloth barrier between the ice and skin. Do not place ice directly on a cast or splint.

• Bruising around the wrist, forearm, and into the hand and fingers is common after surgery. This will resolve on its own within a few weeks.

Diet and Hydration

• Resume your regular diet as tolerated unless otherwise instructed.

• Protein and carbohydrates are critical to post-surgical recovery. Make sure you are eating clean sources of nutrients and supplementing if needed.

• Start with light meals if you have nausea.

• Drink plenty of fluids unless you were told to limit fluid intake.

• Smoking, vaping, or tobacco use are strictly prohibited after surgery, and can cause major complications with bone and wound healing if used.

Call the Office Immediately If You Have:

- Fever greater than 101.5°F (38.6°C)
- Increasing redness, warmth, swelling, or drainage from the incision
- Severe pain not controlled by prescribed medication
- Numbness, tingling, or worsening weakness in the hand or fingers
- Fingers that become pale, blue, cold, or very painful when you move them
- A splint or cast that becomes too tight, wet, cracked, or falls off
- Persistent nausea or vomiting

For a true emergency — chest pain, severe shortness of breath, uncontrolled bleeding, or any other urgent medical concern — call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room immediately.

Follow-Up Appointment

Please call the office at **718-208-1440** to schedule a follow-up appointment between 10–14 days after surgery.

Home Exercises

Perform these exercises gently and only within the range allowed by your splint, cast, or brace. Repeat each 10 times, 3–4 sessions per day, and stop if you have a significant increase in pain or swelling.

Finger Range of Motion: Slowly make a full fist, then straighten your fingers completely. Repeat throughout the day — this is the single most important exercise for preventing stiffness and swelling in the hand.

Thumb Motion: Touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of each finger in turn, then move the thumb away from the palm. Keep the motion gentle and pain-free.

Shoulder Range of Motion: Gently move your shoulder through a comfortable range (circles, forward and backward swings) to prevent stiffness while your wrist heals.